

Springer Block (Bay State Building
and Kranz Building)
126-146 North State Street
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1008

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
11-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
801 - 19th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

THE SPRINGER BLOCK
(LATER BAY STATE BUILDING AND KRANZ BUILDING)HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
11-

Location: 126-146 North State Street; southwest corner of State and Randolph Streets, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: H. Sigman.

Present Occupant: E. Burnham School of Beauty Culture, Office and Shops.

Statement of Significance: Designed by the firm of Carter, Drake, and Wight immediately after the 1871 fire, the building is a typical commercial structure of that era. It is distinguished by its relatively plain stonework and large bay windows on the east side.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 1, 6, 7, 8 and part of 9 in Block 37 of the Original Town of Chicago. [Note: Randall distinguishes between the Bay State Building at 136-146 North State Street, on Lots 1, 6 and 7, and the Kranz Building at 126-132 North State Street, on Lot 8 and part of 9 (Frank A. Randall, History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949), pp. 62, 66). In the following sections this distinction will be explained.]

The chain of title for Lots 1, 6 and 7, found in Deed Book 454c, pp. 59-60, in the Cook County Recorder's Office, begins with an entry dated February 26, 1874, after the building was erected. On that date, the Administrators for David Sears entered into a number of agreements relating to the alley between the lots (Document 152764).

George A. Springer, a Chicago real estate man of that time [A. T. Andreas, History of Chicago (3 Volumes; Published by the Author, 1886), Vol. III, p. 452] is said to have been the original owner of the building. He is first mentioned in the Deed Book on February 10, 1877 (Document 121977). The most recent entry of May 22, 1963 names H. Sigman as owner (Document 18804005). The chain of title for lots 8 and 9 is also found in Book 454c, pp. 72-73.

John M. Kranz is first mentioned on March 8, 1881 as leasee from Paul Seeber (Document 313879).

2. Date of erection: Four original stories. 1872.
3. Architect: Carter, Drake and Wight.
4. Additions and alterations: The present form of the building is the result of a complicated series of building and remodelling.

The property was originally the site of a four-story building owned by Charles Tobey and Brother, Furniture and Upholstery Warerooms [Randall, op. cit., p. 76; Chicago Yesterday and Today (Chicago: Feliz Mendelsohn, Publisher, 1932), p. 60]. This building was remodeled in 1859 by Peter B. Wight and at that time was known as the Commercial College [William W. Clay, "Peter B. Wight (A Biography)," A paper presented to the Illinois Chapter of the American Institute of Architects Chicago, June 10, 1913. Folder in the Chicago Historical Society Library]. It was later destroyed by the fire of 1871.

In 1871 Wight joined Asher Carter and W. H. Drake to form the firm of Carter, Drake, and Wight. During this period the firm rebuilt the Commercial College for the same owners. At this time the building was referred to as the Bay State Block [ibid.].

It should be noted that there is some confusion as to the correct name of the structure built after the fire. Its original name was probably the Springer Block ["Two Years after the Fire," Chicago Illustrated (Chicago: J. M. Wing & Co., Publishers, The Land Owner), October 9, 1873, p. 48]. An old view in this periodical depicts the original Springer Block as a four-story building with the same approximate plan and fenestration as the lower four stories of the present Bay State and Kranz buildings. The illustration shows the date "1872" above the northeast third floor corner window and the name "Springer" above the cornice.

It appears that the original Springer Block extended from 126 to 146 North State Street and that the present Bay State and Kranz buildings were the result of additions and alterations made on the Springer Block. In 1888 the Bay State Building was completely remodeled, enlarged, and transformed into fashionable professional offices. Much of the interior was finished in white marble [Randall, op. cit., p. 208]. At approximately the same time a \$40,000 renovation and

alteration program was carried out on the Kranz Building by Adler and Sullivan. Two additional stories of offices were added, which were to conform in design with the adjoining building, at this date referred to as the Springer Building The Building Budget, Vol. III, No. 6 (June 30, 1887), p. 2; Vol. III, No. 7 (July 30, 1887), p. 17.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

The Kranz Building was the home of John Kranz's Confectionary, a fashionable showplace of Chicago society in the 1890's. John Kranz came to Chicago from Germany in 1868 and opened a small shop on Blue Island Avenue. After the 1871 fire, he moved to the State Street address. The interior of his establishment was lavishly decorated with bisque marble pillars, Mexican onyx tables, wall cases of bird's-eye maple, and curved mirrors. Mosaics, stained glass, decorations, and murals were by R. W. Bates, a Boston architect, and Abner Crossman of Chicago. These features were retained when the interior was remodeled in the 1890's. Several old views show the influence of the European Art Nouveau on the interior design Marilyn Robb, "Kranz--The passing of a Transaction," Townsfolk, Vol. 36, No. 5 (February, 1947), pp. 10, 227.

C. Bibliography:

Andreas, A. T. History of Chicago. 3 Vols. Published by the Author, 1886. Vol. III, p. 452.

The Building Budget. Vol. III, No. 6 (June 30, 1887). p. 2; Vol. III, No. 7 (July 30, 1887). p. 1.

Adler and Sullivan additions to the John Kranz Building, 76 to 82 N. State Street.

Chicago Yesterday and Today. Chicago: Felix Mendelsohn, Publisher, 1932. p. 60.

Old views of the southwest corner of State and Randolph Streets showing the pre-fire building on the site (c. 1857) and the Bay State Building (c. 1895).

Clay, William W. "Peter B. Wight (A Biography)." A paper presented to the Illinois Chapter of the American Institute of Architects Chicago, June 10, 1913.

Folder in the Chicago Historical Society Library. (See Supplementary Material.)

Gilbert, Paul, and Bryson, Charles Lee. Chicago and Its Makers. Chicago: Felix Mendelsohn, Publisher, 1929. Photograph p.346.

McLean, Robert C. "Peter Bonnett Wight, F.A.I.A., an Obituary," Western Architect. Vol. 34, No. 10 (October 1925). pp. 100-103.

Randall, Frank A. History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949. pp. 62,66,67,208.

Robb, Marilyn. "Kranz--The passing of a Transaction," Townsfolk. Vol. 36, No. 5 (February 1947). p. 22, photographs of interior p. 10.

"Two Years after the Fire," Chicago Illustrated. Chicago: J. M. Wing & Co., Publishers, The Land Owner, October 9, 1873. p. 48.

Perspective drawing of the original four-story Springer Block of 1872 at the southwest corner of State and Randolph Streets. Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.

Wight, Peter B. "A Portrait Gallery of Chicago Architects, IV, Asher Carter, F.A.I.A.," Western Architect. Vol. 34, No. 1 (January 1925). pp. 10-13.

An account of the formation of the firm Carter, Drake, and Wight and a description of its work.

D. Supplemental Material:

The following notes are extracted from: "Peter B. Wight (A Biography)", presented to the members and guests of the Illinois chapter of the American Institute of Architects by William W. Clay on the occasion of the presentation of a portrait of Mr. Wight to the chapter by Allen Philbrick, June 10, 1913, at the Cliff Dwellers Club, Chicago, Illinois.

Peter B. Wight - Born: August 1, 1838, New York City.

Education: Public Schools, Free Academy, City College - B.A. 1855 Student Draftsman.

1857-1858: First plans for suburban brick stores and offices.

1858: Offered business in Chicago. Remodeled old Commercial College, southwest corner State and Randolph Streets, (site of the Springer Block).

Returned to New York.

1863-1865: Won design competition for New Academy of Design in New York.

1867: Designed Yale School of Fine Arts.

1867: Designed Brooklyn Mercantile Library.

1871: Invited to join Carter and Drake in Chicago. In two years they erected \$3,000,000 in buildings. "During this period Mr. Wight rebuilt the Commercial College buildings, now called the Bay State Block, which he had remodeled in 1859 for the same owners."

1872-1873: Associated with H. H. Richardson in the erection of the American Express Building on Monroe Street.

1873-1875: Architect for the residence of Eliphalet Blatchford on North La Salle Street, between Elm and Maple.

1881: "Consulting architect with Burnham and Root for the Montauk Block, now removed, for which he designed the first grill foundation ever used for any building, using old iron rails for concrete reinforcement."

Until 1891 Wight Fire Proofing Company.

1891: Columbian Exposition buildings.

Continued remodelling buildings.

Contributor to Literature of Fine Arts and Architecture.

1866: Elected F.A.I.A. (New York)

1872: Elected F.A.I.A. (Chicago)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is one of the few Chicago works of the influential architect Peter B. Wight. It shows the use of medieval detail and smooth polychromatic surfaces typical of the period.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: At present, the Springer Block (now divided into the Bay State and Kranz Buildings) is six stories.

2. Over-all dimensions: 78' high (the four original stories plus the two added later). The north side is about 34' long, divided into three bays. The east side, about 100' long, is divided into twelve bays. The upper two-story addition of 1888 extends south, adding two stories to the building at 124 North State Street, which was not part of the original Springer Block. This building to the south at 124 North State Street and the Kranz Building section of the Springer Block also share a continuous simple concrete cornice, apparently a recent alteration.
3. Layout, shape: Rectangular in plan.
4. Foundations: According to Randall, op. cit., pp. 66, 208, the building has one basement, and rests on spread foundations.
5. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls are made of smooth-surfaced limestone, with small molded string courses between floors at the window sill levels. The northeast corner of the building is cut off diagonally, and was originally the main face. The 1872 date stone at this diagonal face has been covered with a large sign. The original ivory-colored stone and brown trim is visible on the Kranz portion of the building, but the Bay State portion has been painted gray. An assortment of store fronts and signs has obscured the lower two stories.
6. Openings: The windows of the second floor have segmental arched heads with Gothic labels. Third floor windows have segmental arches. The fourth floor windows have semi-circular blind arches with incised carving in the tympana. The windows are made of wood and are double-hung, with single-light sash. Two large bay windows on the east side, made of iron, extend from the third through the sixth floor, and cannot date from before the 1888 addition.
7. Roof: The Bay State part of the building has a molded iron cornice with parapet, probably added later.
8. Stairways: The building has two passenger elevators.

Prepared by Osmund Overby
Supervisory Architect
and
Larry J. Homolka
Historian
National Park Service
August 1963